

Top Ten List

Integrating Birth to 3rd Grade Policies and Practices to Improve Learning Outcomes

Below are ten actions that educators and administrators can take to promote a birth to third grade education continuum in their schools and districts.

- 1. Understand the Learning Standards:** Ensure that elementary staff and administrators understand the Illinois Learning Standards, including the Early Learning and Development Standards and Early Learning Guidelines, and incorporate them into their oversight and continuum of teaching practices.
- 2. Focus on the Whole Child:** Develop a district philosophy and instructional practices that encourage educating the whole child, which includes developing children's physical, social, cognitive, language, and emotional development.
- 3. Promote Family/School Partnerships:** Dedicate space and resources for families – even those whose children are not yet in public school - to meet with school staff to learn how to better support their child's learning.
- 4. Use Data to Improve Instruction:** Use student assessment data to monitor and improve curriculum development, instruction and school-wide learning; with our youngest students, authentic, observational assessments can provide a reliable feedback to inform future work.
- 5. Observe and Provide Feedback to Teachers:** Use observational tools to evaluate effective Birth-3rd grade, multi-domain instructional practices and provide meaningful feedback to teachers on areas of strength and improvement to create constructive learning environments.
- 6. Dedicate Time to Focus on Alignment:** Provide regular professional development opportunities, both across and within grade level teams, which are focused on aligning curriculum, teaching practices, and assessments from Birth-3rd grade.
- 7. Support Opportunities for Joint Conversations:** Support opportunities for joint professional learning and discussion on curriculum and teaching practices between early childhood community providers and early elementary teachers.
- 8. Use the Same Criteria for Kindergarten Readiness:** Ensure that school districts, early childhood teachers and community providers create the same standards-based criteria for assessing kindergarten readiness.
- 9. Build Strong Partnerships Between the Community and Schools:** Strengthen partnerships with early childhood and community providers to promote seamless, informed transitions from early learning programs to kindergarten for children and their families.
- 10. Establish a Birth to 3rd Grade Advisory Group:** Establish an advisory board comprised of leaders across early childhood and elementary school settings to discuss collaboration and to identify local, state, federal and private resources that can be leveraged to support Birth-3rd objectives.

References:

Kauerz, K. & Coffman, J. (2013). Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches. Seattle, WA: College of Education, University of Washington.

From Birth to Graduation and Beyond: Aligning Best Practices in Educational Systems to Improve Learning Outcomes. Center for the Study of Educational Policy, Illinois State University. Available at:
<http://leadershiplinc.illinoisstate.edu/LincReport10-28-12%20pdf.pdf>